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The CIA and Its Cult of Detractors Still Await Full Story

By JAMES WIEGHART

Washington, March 13—The latest rash of titillating spy stories popping up across the country concerning alleged misdeeds of the CIA have perked up the press corps here and provided spicy reading for the rest of the nation.

Starting with the charges that the CIA conducted a mammoth illegal domestic intelligence operation aimed at Americans opposed to the Vietnam war or engaged in other political dissent and continuing with the more recent allegations that the CIA combined with the Mafia in various assassination plots against foreign leaders, the stories have easily upstaged the dull daily coverage of the political infighting between congress and the White House over economic and energy policy.

Deep, Deep Trouble

Coming on the heels of the Watergate scandal, in which the spy organization played a patsy's role, it is not surprising that allegations of such serious wrongdoing have precipitated a flurry of investigations of the CIA by Congress and the executive branch. The net result is that the CIA is in

trouble, deep trouble. The morale of the agency's 15,000 employees is badly shaken and its very ability to carry out its intelligence mission has been seriously undercut. The time and energy of Di-



rector William Colby is almost entirely consumed these days with testifying before the Rockefeller CIA commission or the various congressional investigating committees and this is likely to continue for much of this year.

This is all very well and good if the allegations are based on fact, because then it could be said the CIA brought these troubles on itself. But it would be very bad if it turns out that the charges were essentially false—bad for the country and bad for the news media, which propagated the charges.

This danger signal should be raised now because it appears possible that the two most sensational charges—that the CIA engaged in widespread illegal domestic spying and that it contracted with Mafia hit men to bump off Castro and

possibly other foreign leaders—are both still largely undocumented at this time.

True, Colby has admitted in public testimony that over the past 15 years there have been a few instances in which the CIA spied in the United States against Americans using wiretaps, illegal entry and mail covers. But he insists that all but a few of these operations were aimed at CIA personnel, ex-employees or persons who did business with the agency. The others, he has said, involved efforts to determine if the Americans were involved with foreign spy operations.

Colby also disclosed that these instances were uncovered in 1973 by former CIA Director James R. Schlesinger and were terminated at that time. He also categorically denies that such domestic operations were either widespread or illegal.

Expert to Substantiate

Colby's account will be substantiated by testimony from the most knowledgeable non-CIA expert around—Sam Pappish, a former FBI official who retired in 1971 after serving 17 years as head of the FBI's office of liaison with the CIA.

In a telephone interview, Pappish labeled the domestic spying charge "a lot of baloney." He said there were "a few instances" where the CIA impinged on FBI's domestic counter-intelligence monopoly, but added that it was always the fault of individual agents and not a result of CIA policy.

The CIA-Mafia assassination connection—the subject of Georgetown cocktail party speculation for years—hit the front pages this week when two former aides to the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy claimed that the senator told them that he had stopped such a plot against Fidel Castro in 1961, before the Bay of Pigs disaster.

No Comment Yet

Colby has not commented on that allegation yet. But former CIA Director John McCone, a Robert Kennedy intimate who took over the CIA following the Bay of Pigs, said he never had heard of such a thing. And Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who has declined to comment publicly, passed the word through an aide that he strongly doubted the story.

Of course, none of this proves that either allegation is untrue. But such denials surely demand further documentation of the charges before they can be accepted as true and endlessly repeated by every reporter who sits down to write a CIA expose.

ORGL MAFIA

CIA 4.01 ASSASSINATION
CIA 1.01 Colby, William